

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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ROME FOR RCAA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, IS, US
SUBJECT: CIVIL AVIATION: EL AL AIRCRAFT PURCHASE

1. LOCKHEED CHAIRMAN ROY ANDERSON, ACCOMPANIED BY BOB WILLS AND GEORGE LOMBARD, BRIEFED EMBOFFS ON THE LATEST TALKS WITH EL AL ON AUGUST 3. THEY WERE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT LOCKHEED'S CHANCES BUT HAD NOT GIVEN UP ON THIS SALES OPPORTUNITY. IT WAS THEIR EVALUATION THAT EL AL HAD BEEN COMMITTED TO THE AIRBUS FOR SOME TIME AND HAD USED LOCKHEED'S VERY FORTHCOMING OFFERS PRIMARILY AS A MEANS OF GETTING BETTER TERMS FROM THE EUROPEANS.

2. IN A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR LEWIS, ANDERSON ASKED FOR EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN CONVINCING EL AL TO BUY AMERICAN AIRCRAFT.

3. AT A DINNER GIVEN BY EL AL CHAIRMAN BEN-ARI ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 3, THE AMBASSADOR PUSHED MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AMIT AND EL AL PRESIDENT HOD
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VERY HARD ON THE QUESTION OF BUYING AMERICAN PLANES. SINCE THE DINNER WAS TO CELEBRATE THE SIGNING OF THE U.S.-ISRAEL BILATERAL CIVIL AVIATION AGREEMENT, THE AMBASSADOR REMINDED AMIT AND HOD THAT AN ISRAELI STATESMAN HAD RECENTLY SUGGESTED THAT "YOU DON'T GET SIMETHING FOR NOTHING." THE ISRAELIS WERE AMUSED BUT WERE NOT ENCOURAGING ABOUT LOCKHEED'S CHANCES. AMIT ARGUED THAT LOCKHEED

HAD COME INTO THE PICTURE TOO LATE, AFTER A "LOVE AFFAIR" HAD ALREADY DEVELOPED BETWEEN EL AL AND THE AIRBUS. HOD OFFERED SOME ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ARGUMENTS WHICH HE SAID MADE THE AIRBUS PREFERABLE FOR EL AL'S SHORT-TERM NEEDS FOR TRAFFIC TO EUROPE. FOR THE LONGER TERM, HOD ISRAELIS SAID THAT THEIR REAL "LOVE AFFAIR" WAS WITH BOEING AND THAT THEY WILL START BUYING THE 767 WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE; THEY WOULD BUY IT NOW IF THEY COULD. MEANWHILE, THE SAID, EL AL WILL ADD TO ITS 747 FLEET TO MEET ADDITIONAL SEAT REQUIREMENTS TO THE U.S.

4. E/C COUNSELOR AND COMMATTACHE HAD FURTHER CONVERSATIONS EVENING OF AUGUST 3 WITH OTHER EL AL AND FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND URGED U.S. EQUIPMENT PURCHASE.

5. COMMENT: OUR INFORMATION IS THAT MANY OF THE PILOTS, OPERATIONS PEOPLE AND TECHNICIANS IN EL AL WOULD PREFER THE LOCKHEED 1011. THE PROBLEM IS THAT MOTTI HOD COMMITTED HIS PRESTIGE TO THE AIRBUS BEFORE HE HAD MADE A THOROUGH STUDY OF EL AL'S REQUIREMENTS. ANY REVERSAL OF THAT COMMITMENT WOULD BE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO HOD AND THE EL AL MANAGEMENT APPEARS TO HAVE LINED UP BEHIND HIM, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY, OUT OF LOYALTY. NEVERTHELESS, THE EMBASSY AND LOCKHEED INTEND TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEWIS

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NNN

Message Attributes

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